

# Achieving the International Benchmarks for Adult Literacy in Nigeria : Post 2015 Challenges and Prospects

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## Abstract

The story of Adult education in Nigeria is not complete without the activities of itinerant Islamic scholars and traders dating as far back as the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The Methodist mission, the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S) and other Christian churches pioneered what can be termed as “modern literacy” in Nigeria. The major difference between the activities of Islamic missionaries and Christian missionaries is the acceptance of western education in the south and its rejection in the north. Despite this early involvement in literacy activities, illiteracy still persists in Nigeria. Literacy developments efforts in Nigeria include collaboration with UNESCO in the establishment of an Adult Literacy Institute in Ibadan. In 1965, the University of Ibadan started the training of professional adult educators. Other initiatives include pre-primary education, primary education, the first three years of secondary education (JSS), and literacy for adolescents, adults and women’s education. To help improve literacy development situation, the International Community on Education has put forward a 12 points benchmark on literacy delivery. With the current rate of illiteracy and the fact that the deadline of 2015 which was earlier scheduled for halving the illiterates population could not be met, the credibility of the government activities, most especially in the area of funding, commitment, programmes, strategies and the institutions established on the success or otherwise on the benchmarks as far as Nigeria is concerned has been called into question. Using relevant literature on the topic and personal experience of the researcher, this paper is written, to assess Nigeria’s performance in the realization of these benchmarks. However, it established the problems and offers possible recommendations that if applied, would put the country on track again as post 2015 literacy development strategy.

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**Keywords:** Adult Literacy, Benchmarks, Challenges, Nigeria, Prospects

### **Background to the Study**

The story of Adult education in Nigeria is not complete without the activities of itinerant Islamic scholars and traders dating as far back as the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The Methodist mission, the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S) and other Christian churches pioneered what could be termed as “modern literacy” in Nigeria. While the Christian Missionary covered the southern part of Nigeria, Islamic scholars were successful in the northern part of the country. Thus, this encourages reading and writing in Arabic and Islamic studies. The major difference between the activities of these missionaries is the acceptance of western education in the south and its rejection in the north. Despite this early involvement in literacy activities, it is sad that illiteracy still persists in Nigeria. However, successive governments have always claimed education to be their top priority agenda. The introduction of the Universal Primary Education in September 1976 was the first major national initiative that was aimed at universal access to education (UNESCO, 1998).

Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, has a total population set at 140 million (National Population Commission, 2006) with more than 250 ethnic groups. With an area covering 923,768 sq km (356,669 sq mi), Nigeria is a nation with diverse cultural heritage. Hence, among the major tribes are the Hausa, Igbo and the Yoruba. Although Nigeria have had a National Policy on Education since 1981, it has not implemented this policy effectively and efficiently due to rapid population growth, insufficient political will, a long period of military rule, and the poor management of scarce resources.

Consequently, UNESCO (2006) reported that one in every five adults globally are unable to participate meaningfully in decisions that affect their lives. Thus, they are severely ill-equipped to combat poverty, discrimination, HIV/AIDs and other diseases. In addition, they are unjustly restricted in their ability to exercise other rights and freedoms because they are continually denied access to literacy skills. Also, the National Population Commission (NPC, 2006) as well as the World Bank (2010) assessment of literacy rate puts Nigeria literacy rate at 56.5 per cent. Thus, this is because of the continued increase in population coupled with little or no effort on non-formal education, particularly literacy. It was not surprising that the goal of the Education for All (EFA) to increase literacy rate by 50 per cent before the year 2015 became a dream rather than a reality.

The most recent literacy rates in the UIS database are for the year 2010. Fewer than two out of three adults were literate: Nigeria, adult literacy rates increased over the following two decades. The increase between 1990

and 2010 ranges from 6% in Mexico and Nigeria to 28% in Egypt (NMDG Report, 2013). The literacy rate among women in urban areas in 2012 (87.0%) was higher than that for women in rural areas (56.60%). Efforts appear to be concentrated on the urban areas rather than on the rural areas as the available **incentives** are not enough to attract and retain literacy teachers in the rural areas. The allowance paid to adult education facilitators in LGAs was NGN 7,500 which is abysmally low and below the minimum wage. Yet, in most states and LGAs, they were paid below the NGN 7,500 stipulated as the benchmark, which is a disincentive to professional adult educators (Obasi, 2011; FME, 2010).

However, it should be stated that the Federal Government had made several attempts in the past in improving literacy development. Such efforts include formal declaration of a nationwide war against illiteracy on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> of September, 1982. This took place in a Mass Literacy Campaign which covered ten years from 1982-1992. Other attempts were the establishment of the Nomadic Education Commission (1990), the State Agencies for Adult and Non Education (1990), the National Commission for Mass Literacy Adult and Non-Formal Education (NMEC) in 1991 and the National Primary Education Commission (1993) which mid-wifed the Universal Basic Education programme (UBE) in 1999. Later, it metamorphosed into the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) and the State Universal Basic Education Boards SUBEB in 2004 at both National and State levels among others. Nigeria has participated in all deliberations concerning Education for All (EFA) since the Jomtien Conference in 2000.

In helping this situation, the International Community on Education has put forward a 12 points benchmark on literacy delivery. Thus, they expect all countries to put in place necessary efforts that will make its achievement possible. It is on this background that this paper is written. **Its** aim **is** access Nigeria's performance in the realization of these benchmarks. However, it establishes the problems and offer possible recommendations that, if applied, would put the country on track again after missing the opportunity offered in 2015.

### **Literacy Education Journey So Far**

Globally, education has been recognized to be of critical importance to development. In line with the above, and as enunciated in the introductory chapter of the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2004), education in Nigeria is an instrument "par excellence." In the same vein, and as clearly put forth by Akintayo and Oghenekhowo (2004) within the context of the national objective, the purpose of education is among other things to *"build a just and egalitarian society in which everyone will have full opportunity and*

*justice*” in the realm of national affairs. In this case, adult education thus becomes a veritable instrument for achieving the basic national objectives.

The table below further reveals the number per million of the total population of various groups in Nigeria. Also, it shows the critical need for adult literacy in the scheme of things in Nigeria. The figure shows that apart from cases of out-of-school children or nomadic children, about 33 per cent of the population as at 2002 was illiterate. However, the 2006 population was in no mean different from the previous data.

**Table I**

| S/N | GROUP   | ESTIMATED NO        | % OF POPULATION OF NIGERIA |
|-----|---|---------------------|----------------------------|
| 1.  | Children aged 0-6 years                                 | 15m                 | 17%                        |
| 2.  | Primary Schoolb children<br>(including nomadic schools) | 25m                 | 25%                        |
| 3.  | Junior Secondary school children                        | 5m                  | 4%                         |
| 4.  | Illiterate adults (48% of Nigeria's 80 Million adults)  | 39.6 million        | 33%                        |
| 5.  | Out-of school youth                                     | 15 million          | 17%                        |
|     | <b>Total</b>  | <b>98.6 million</b> | <b>80%</b>                 |

**Source:** Obanya, Pai (2002): Revitalizing Education in Africa. Stirling-Horden Publishers (Nig. Ltd) Ibadan, Nigeria.

By understanding the importance placed on education, adult and non-formal education programmes have significantly provided for the target groups of adults and youths. This is instructive on the goals of Education for All (EFA) initiative, which in summary is the provision of free basic education as a must for every citizen. Envisioned towards this end, the main objectives of Adult and Non-Formal Education programme in Nigeria is to:

- (i) Provide tuition free adult and non-formal education for all trainees;
- (ii) Provide functional literacy and continuing education for adults and youths who neither had the advantage of formal education nor had the privilege to complete their primary education. This also include nomads, migrant families and the physically challenged;
- (iii) Provide functional and remedial education for young people who failed to complete their primary and secondary education;
- (iv) Provide opportunities for furtherance of education for those who desire to do so;
- (v) Provide in-service, on the job, vocational and allied training for different categories of workers and professionals in order to improve their skills; and,
- (vi) Enlighten indigenes on cultural and civic education.

## **Adult Literacy Development in Nigeria**

Literacy efforts in Nigeria have received a significant boost when UNESCO supported the establishment of an Adult Literacy Institute in Ibadan. Further progress came in 1965 when the University of Ibadan started the training of professional adult educators. The major contribution during the military era would seem to be the founding of the Nigerian National Council for Adult Education (NNCAE) in 1977. This culminated in making clear statements on adult education in the National Policy on Education and the declaration of educational objectives in the new Nigerian Constitution effective from October 1979. However, this clearly indicates that, “Government shall strive to eradicate illiteracy” (Fasokun, 2007).

In Nigeria, successive governments have always claimed education as their top priority agenda. The introduction of the Universal Primary Education in September 1976 was the first major national initiative that was targeted at the universal access to education (UNESCO, 1998). Till date, Nigeria has participated in all deliberations concerning Education for All (EFA) since Jomtien Conference. Furthermore, the Federal and State Governments of Nigeria have taken certain steps to curb the menace of illiteracy. Even though the Federal Government formally declared a nationwide war against illiteracy and launched the Mass Literacy Campaign that covered the ten years period between 1982 and 1992, such efforts have not been followed to the letter. Also, subsequent efforts have not been geared towards such long duration of programme.

Major initiatives that have also taken place include the expansion of basic education in 1992 to include pre-primary education, primary education, the first three years of secondary education (JSS), literacy for adolescents and adults, and women’s education. Aderinoye (1997) observed that much effort was recorded between 1989 and 1996 in educational history. However, this ‘golden age’ opportunity was not well utilized because the government failed to back up the various policies made with adequate funding.

In writing about the rate as well as the state of literacy in Nigeria, Aderinoye (2005) states that Nigeria would need to rely on data emanating from major partners like, UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank and some NGOS. Also, the efforts of the University Village Association (UNIVA) in partnership with the agencies cannot go unnoticed and unappreciated. UNICEF in 2004 put Nigeria’s literacy rate at 47.5%. This is due to the continued increase in population coupled with little or no effort on non-formal education, particularly literacy.

The International benchmarks on Adult Literacy are a Global Education Campaign (GEC) designed to facilitate serious planning in order to achieve the Dakar "Education for All" (EFA) goal of 50% reduction in adult illiteracy by 2015. With the current rate of illiteracy and the fact that

the year 2015 deadline, which was earlier scheduled for the halving of illiterate population is passed, the credibility of government activities, programmes, strategies and the institutions established on the success or otherwise on the benchmark as far as Nigeria is concerned has been called into question. To do this, let us examine the score sheet of Nigeria via each of the benchmark and proffer the necessary actions that need to be taken for continued and improved performance.

### **The International Benchmarks on Adult Literacy**

**Benchmark 1:** Literacy is about acquiring and using reading, writing and numeracy skills, and thereby the development of active citizenship, improved health and livelihoods, and gender equality.

**Benchmark 2:** Literacy should be seen as a continuous process that requires regular and sustained learning. There are no magic lines to cross.

**Benchmark 3:** Government must take the lead responsibility, providing leadership and resources, working in systematic collaboration with civil society and decentralizing budgets and decision making.

**Benchmark 4:** Governments should invest in ongoing feedback and evaluation mechanisms, data systematization and strategic research.

**Benchmark 5:** Facilitators should be paid at least the equivalent of the minimum wage of a primary school teacher for all hours worked.

**Benchmark 6:** Facilitators should receive substantial initial and regular refresher training, as well as having opportunities for professional development.

**Benchmark 7:** Facilitators should work with groups of not more than 30 learners and there should be at least one trainer/supervisor to 15 learner groups.

**Benchmark 8:** Learners in multilingual context should be given an active choice about the language in which they learn.

**Benchmark 9:** Learners should be actively stimulated through the use of a wide range of participatory methods and through addressing issues of relevance to their lives.

**Benchmark 10:** Governments should stimulate the market for production and distribution of suitable reading materials and should support production of materials by learners and facilitators.

**Benchmark 11:** Governments should commit between US\$50 and US\$100 per learner per year for at least three years.

**Benchmark 12:** Governments should dedicate at least 3% of their national education sector budgets to adult literacy. International donors should fill any remaining resource gaps.

## **Challenges and Prospect of Achieving the Benchmark on Adult Literacy in Nigeria**

**Benchmark 1: Literacy is about acquiring and using reading, writing and numeracy skills, and thereby the development of active citizenship, improved health and livelihoods, and gender equality.**

As outlined in the enabling law setting up the National Mass Education Commission (NMEC) and States' Agencies of Adult and Non-Formal Education (AANFE), Nigeria's educational policy, goals and **objectives have** been geared towards practical and functional compliance. This is in a bid to fast track the achievement of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) which is Nigeria's home grown mechanism or programme for achieving the goals of EFA by the year 2015. Institutions like the moribund Mass Mobilization for Social Justice, Self-Reliance and Economic Recovery (MAMSER) had been put in place to mobilize citizens, particularly the rural dwellers, for the revamping of the country's ailing economy. However, this is achieved through literacy designed to create active citizenship and in fostering health and preventive education with topics such as HIV/AIDS, corruption and peace education.

Nigeria's adult literacy programme covers basic literacy skills in the mother tongue. It also covers the post literacy programme which allows the integration and acquisition of vocational skills in literacy programme for economic empowerment of the beneficiaries and creation of opportunities for illiterate adults and adolescents to acquire basic literacy skills of reading, writing, and numeracy in the mother tongue of the immediate environment. Virtually all the literacy programmes are designed to meet the needs of the learners and promote active citizenship. Some states of the federation have designed various systems for adult education delivery. Consequently, Ondo State in particular has NIFELD (New Initiatives for Effective Literacy Delivery); and Oyo State has mobile and drop-in centres in order to reach the marginalized population. Furthermore, States like Kano and Bauchi have designed programmes to cater for women education. The standard curriculum which has been translated into major languages covers subjects on health issues, environment, politics, peace and discussions on improved livelihood strategies.

The need to increase the access of learners to literacy brought about the piloting of the Literacy by Radio. The programme was aimed at reaching large number of learners in their convenience since no schools are required. However, there were more than 24,000 learners in the twelve pilot states (Sokoto, Kebbi, Niger, Nasarawa, Enugu, Ebonyi, Cross River, Bayelsa, Osun, Ogun, Yobe and Borno). Hence, success reports fueled the spread of literacy radio to other states. December, 2006, witnessed the graduation of the first three classes of the pilot states (Niger, Sokoto and Kebbi). It is worth

mentioning that by December 2006; more than two million learners would have been receiving basic literacy lessons over the radio nationwide. However, improper handling strategy, failure to provide counterpart funding, and a host of other problems have forced the stoppage of the programme.

In the case of gender equality, there has always been a problem of unequal educational opportunities between girls and boys in some states, especially in the northern and eastern parts of the country (see Table 2). The national literacy rate for females is only 56%, compared to 72% for males. In certain states, the female literacy, enrolment and achievement rates are much lower. For example, in girls' net enrolment in Sokoto, one of the six target states under the UNICEF African Girls' Education Initiative is 15%, compared to 59% for boys. UNICEF has traditionally acted as a catalyst to energize and accelerate actions taken by the Nigerian government and other partners, to ameliorate or remove the constraints identified.

Despite the relevance of communication skills to literacy acquisition and sustainability, most adult learners find it difficult to continue reading and writing after completing their literacy programme, resulting into relapse into illiteracy. In order to facilitate effective and sustained reading ability by the learners, facilitators are expected to encourage group reading habits among the learners as this would promote confidence and remove fear in them. Writing skills could be encouraged through the introduction of 2D Exercise books (specially designed to control handwriting) and regular class activities where writing either on chalkboards or notebooks is encouraged. A topical issues bordering about health, environment, politics can be raised to generate discussions among the learners, by their involvement, learners would not only attain the three Rs (Reading, Writing and Numeracy) but re-inject self confidence and inculcate the spirit of belongingness in the society.

**Table 2: States exhibiting the most serious gender disparity trends in Nigeria**

| State           | 1999              |                     |              |                | 2000              |                     |              |                | 2001              |                     |              |                |
|-----------------|-------------------|---------------------|--------------|----------------|-------------------|---------------------|--------------|----------------|-------------------|---------------------|--------------|----------------|
|                 | Male Gross Enrol. | Female Gross Enrol. | Gender Ratio | Gender Gap (%) | Male Gross Enrol. | Female Gross Enrol. | Gender Ratio | Gender Gap (%) | Male Gross Enrol. | Female Gross Enrol. | Gender Ratio | Gender Gap (%) |
| Bauchi          | 377701            | 253702              | 0.67         | 20             | 476422            | 301309              | 0.64         | 22             | 681168            | 368406              | 0.54         | 33             |
| Borno           | 340894            | 225502              | 0.67         | 20             | 307376            | 214379              | 0.7          | 18             | 287577            | 192182              | 0.67         | 20             |
| Gombe           | 328217            | 220484              | 0.67         | 20             | 373882            | 265642              | 0.72         | 16             | 437558            | 309100              | 0.7          | 18             |
| Jigawa          | 262415            | 144815              | 0.56         | 28             | 313007            | 174024              | 0.56         | 28             | 296409            | 162659              | 0.54         | 30             |
|                 | 706628            | 476376              | 0.67         | 20             | 779116            | 503984              | 0.64         | 22             | 729789            | 461185              | 0.64         | 22             |
| Katsina         | 417370            | 202516              | 0.49         | 34             | 421862            | 216581              | 0.52         | 32             | 430360            | 219920              | 0.52         | 32             |
| Kebbi           | 145245            | 72050               | 0.49         | 33             | 158797            | 80049               | 0.52         | 32             | 159283            | 81843               | 0.52         | 32             |
| Sokoto          | 362535            | 115061              | 0.32         | 52             | 432773            | 133891              | 0.32         | 52             | 437963            | 150216              | 0.35         | 48             |
| Yobe            | 263579            | 149283              | 0.56         | 28             | 435148            | 232644              | 0.54         | 30             | 603484            | 244461              | 0.41         | 42             |
| Zamfara         | 203040            | 67158               | 0.33         | 50             | 212377            | 73909               | 0.35         | 48             | 212455            | 75700               | 0.35         | 48             |
| Adamawa         | 247392            | 171585              | 0.69         | 18             | 201956            | 211045              | 0.7          | 18             | 263688            | 187035              | 0.71         | 17             |
| <b>National</b> | <b>103052</b>     | <b>8174508</b>      | <b>0.79</b>  | <b>12</b>      | <b>10744121</b>   | <b>8413313</b>      | <b>0.77</b>  | <b>13</b>      | <b>10932217</b>   | <b>8452863</b>      | <b>0.79</b>  | <b>12</b>      |

*Source:* FME ESA Secretariat: Revised Baseline Data (2003).



**Benchmark 2: Literacy should be seen as a continuous process that requires regular and sustained learning. There are no magic lines to cross**

Education delivery in many low income countries is often characterized by a top-down approach, where decisions are taken at the centre and are expected to be implemented at all levels irrespective of their peculiar circumstances and needs (Akyeampong, 2004). Unlike what is obtainable in formal education in Nigeria, where there is a gradual promotion from one level of class to the other, there has not been an equivalent level of achievement in adult education. As a result of the problem identified above, many of the adult literacy classes were taken as an “end” rather than as “a means to an end”. Nigeria’s adult literacy programmes have not been able to link up with the sustainability of the learning outcome. It has been observed that some states of the federation have not been able to identify the need for continuity in the literacy provision; hence, there is a deficiency in the effort towards the sustainability of the learning process. As a result, there is a constant report of learners dropping out of the programmes.

However, States like Ondo, Abia, Enugu and Sokoto have vocational and continuing education programmes. The graduates of the basic literacy programmes enroll in these centres to continue their education by learning one vocation or the other. In Ondo in particular, there are Prospect High Schools established by the State Ministry of Vocational and Adult Education for the graduants of basic education and those that have dropped out of the formal education system. Literacy therefore needs to be seen in the context of lifelong learning and the curriculum should be designed as such. It needs to be stated here that the Certificate of Participation being provided to adult learners at the end of the learning period is not recognized or appreciated as a valid qualification for further learning opportunities or for the provision of job. It is therefore necessary for stakeholders especially at the local and state government levels to consider and assess the possibility of developing qualifying examinations that will make mainstreaming into further education possible for adult learners so as to sustain what has been achieved at the adult class in the future.

As it happens in every learning environment, adult literacy could be sustained in an environment where literacy generating-spaces are generated and utilized. What do we mean by “literacy generating-spaces”? The notion of a literacy-generating space include three types of situation which are termed ‘literacy-demanding situations’, ‘literacy-scaffolding situations’, and ‘volunteer literacy situations’. The first one refers to situations that require knowledge and use of reading and writing in order to participate in for example, casting an individual secret vote in an election, following a road sign, or signing legal documents. The second type of situation presents

opportunities for learning about reading and writing through collaboration with other (Lee and Smagorinsky 2000; Newman, Griffin, and Cole, 1991; Bruner, 1975) and the third type includes situations in which readers and writers choose to use literacy simply because they wish to do so. Apart from primers that are predominantly used in adult education, literacy spaces could be generated and use to implement what learners are being taught in the class. Adult educators should manipulate various spaces such as homes (family), schools, post office, churches and mosques, library and newspapers that can serve the purpose of generating learning opportunity for learners.

**Benchmark 3: Government must take the lead responsibility, providing leadership and resources, working in systematic collaboration with civil society and decentralizing budgets and decision making.**

Several efforts have been made by the federal government in providing leadership roles in the implementation of policies on adult education. Such efforts include the declaration of a nationwide war against illiteracy and launching of the Mass Literacy Campaign that covered ten years, 1982-1992. Other attempts as earlier stated are the establishment of the Nomadic Education Commission (1990), the State Agencies for Adult and Non Education (1990), the National Commission for Mass Literacy Adult and Non-Formal Education (NMEC) in 1991, the National Primary Education Commission (1993) which mid-wifed the Universal Basic Education programme (UBE) programme in 1999. Later, it metamorphosed into the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) and the State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEB) in 2004 at both the National and State levels respectively, among others.

Nigeria has participated in all deliberations concerning Education for All (EFA) since the Jomtien Conference in 2000 and has partnered with non-governmental organizations and international organizations like UNESCO, WHO, UNICEF, and UNDP among others on issues like gender equality; and training and funding of adult education programmes in the country. However, it is important to note that there remains the need for improvement, especially in the prompt and release of sufficient fund for non-formal education activities. Support for adult and non-formal education can take the form of grants, equipment, books and so on. UNDP actually intervened in the provision of fund for adult education programmes between 1995 and 1997. However, because of the federal and state counterparts funds were not paid; hence, the organization stopped her funding (AANFE, Oyo State Report, 2003). This notwithstanding, the federal government has not really encouraged adequate collaboration with the civil society.

In fact, grading this phenomenon has placed adult literacy in the hands of international donors who have eventually reduced their commitment to literacy promotion in the country.

Apart from budgetary allocation, various attempts have also been made by the federal government to source for funds for education generally. One of such is the Education Tax Fund (ETF) which was established in 1993. The ETF has since refocused its objectives to cater for only tertiary institutions in the country. Even as at when it was available to all levels of the educational sector, ETF's formula for sharing of the available fund as stated below did not give adequate attention to non-formal education (Tertiary Institutions had 40%, Primary Schools had 20%, Secondary Education had 35% while Non-formal Education was allocated 5% of the fund (Education Today, 2003). Adult literacy remains an orphan as the Education Trust Fund (ETF) commits billions of naira to infrastructural and bibliographic development in tertiary education. Furthermore, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) commits billions of naira to book publishing for primary education. However, nothing was committed to the literacy education of more than 50 million illiterate youths and adults as well as more than seven million Almajiris.

**Benchmark 4: Governments should invest in ongoing feedback and evaluation mechanisms, data systematization and strategic research.**

In Nigeria, the government through the National Policy on Education encouraged evaluation of adult literacy activities through regular test and examination of the learners which always takes place at the end of the session. The policy says that *educational assessment and evaluation shall be liberalized by their being based in whole or in part on continuous assessment of the progress of the individual* (NPC, 2004: 8). Adult literacy is laced with vocational education for economic empowerment of the learners. This further ensures relevance to the main issue of poverty eradication which is central to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) No. 1.

The government takes the lead by providing adult education for free in all adult literacy centres across the state for all its citizens, including adults and youths. The curriculum and methods used are largely learner centred, and learner friendly. However, mechanisms put in place have not been totally effective in linking the adult education data and baseline survey to reflect what operates in the country. This is evident from the fact that Education for All Global Monitoring Reports over the years does not have sufficient information about Nigeria. Records keeping in some of the states has not been adequate enough in providing a true picture of what is obtainable in the country.

**Benchmark 5: Facilitators should be paid at least the equivalent of the minimum wage of a primary school teacher for all hours worked.**

Instructors in adult and non-formal education programmes are generally engaged on a part-time basis. This may be responsible for the poor remuneration paid to them, which on the average, ranges from N350 to N500 per month in some States. No state throughout the federation can boldly state that it pays its facilitators as much as it pays its primary school teachers. It must be stated of course that some states facilitators earn as much as between N2, 500.00 and N5, 000.00. In those states where facilitators are paid well, the facilitators are employed by the states as full time staff of the agencies of adult and non-formal education (Abia, Ondo, Zamfara, and Oyo States fall into the category of the later). Furthermore, inappropriate and inadequate honorarium payments are being faced by majority of the states in Nigeria.

**Benchmark 6: Facilitators should receive substantial initial and regular refresher training, as well as having opportunities for professional development.**

No education system can rise above the quality of its teachers (NPE, 2004). It is equally true that the system in any given society be it social, economic, and or political cannot rise above the quality of its teachers. Adult education facilitators are not exempted from this truth. They are therefore expected to be experienced, skilled and knowledgeable in their work. The least qualification expected of teachers in a formal education system is the Nigerian Certificate in Education. Therefore, this is not the same with non-formal education. Some adult facilitators are not required to have a standard qualification. Many of the adult facilitators are not specialists, professionally trained, or competent enough in teaching an adult class.

It is evident from researches, observations and experiences that most facilitators being used in adult education have pedagogical experience. This might help, but understanding the peculiarities of adult learners would go a long way to improve the qualities of services rendered. To this end, facilitators should endeavour to go for further training. Be readily available for improve their knowledge about adult education and also, must be ready to abide by the rules guiding adult learning. Refresher courses are available in some Colleges of Education and Universities. All stakeholders, most especially the state government and local government should collaborate with international donors to sponsor some of these training as it is expected that the facilitators might not be willing to expend their meager honorarium on training.

**Benchmark 7: Facilitators should work with groups of not more than 30 learners and there should be at least one trainer/supervisor to 15 learner groups.**

With one day training and workshop, anyone can teach in any adult education class. Thus, this does not portray adult education within a standardized system of education. Another issue worth of mentioning is that, majority of the facilitators are classroom teachers and are not experienced in the methods and techniques required to succeed in adult education. Teachers tend to teach the way they were taught. This tendency is a manifestation of modeling. To add to the problem, there are not enough institutions of higher learning formally teaching adult instructional methodologies. Ironically, a few institutions still do not acknowledge that there are some differences between the way teens learn and the way adults learn.

Many facilitators take the job to pass time and/or as another means of improving their economic condition. As a result of the foregoing, many facilitators are not committed to work because of bad management and inappropriate control of adult education programme. The government on its part is not sincere and committed enough to encourage regular training and re-training of these adult facilitators. Graduates of adult education programmes are also employed in some centres to help teach other illiterate adults. The idea of keeping 30 learners in a class and employing a supervisor has not been effective in Nigeria as a result of inadequacy in assessing fund to establish adult literacy classes.

**Benchmark 8: Learners in multilingual context should be given an active choice about the language in which they learn.**

More than 500 languages are spoken in Nigeria. However, the major languages are Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, and Fulani. Linguistically, the country is divided almost in half between those speaking northern languages such as Hausa-Fulani, Kanuri, and Tiv and those speaking southern languages such as Yoruba, Igbo, Edo, and Ibibio. Many of these languages are used in primary schools. This has an implication on adult literacy. Learners are taught in their local dialects except those who specifically requested to be taught in English Language which is the official language. However, the multi-dimensional aspects of culture and socio-linguistics affect the choice of language to be adopted for teaching in areas where there are clashes in choices of interest. There is no doubt that this multilingual difference affects the choice of language with which the primers could be written.

**Benchmark 9: Learners should be actively stimulated through the use of a wide range of participatory methods and through addressing issues of relevance to their lives.**

The result of a study carried out by Olojede (2012) established the fact that the existing curriculum put in place met the life-improvement skills need of more than 80.0% of the beneficiaries in the study. This increase was demonstrated by the learners in the skills they had acquired in the literacy class. The researcher exposed the respondents to some of the topics in the available primers as well as a Post Literacy Reader book by UNIVA. Majority of the FGD group were able to read and explain the contents of the primers. Furthermore, the learners also revealed that they were now able to make use of other services of education and extension (in agriculture, health, water development, etc.). However, they were unable to have access to these services in the past, even though these services were available within

Facilitators who are closer to the learners should be ready to work with Curriculum designers in designing syllabus that will include work oriented topics. Learners want to learn what would be of immediate need to them; hence, the facilitators need to include into their teaching topics that will encourage further participation and usage of skills acquire in the programme. Music and songs that relate to culture, religion and health issues can be part of class activities. A well articulated facilitator is the one that encourage attendance and participation of learners through innovations. Facilitators need to understand this and use it to manipulate learners' involvement in the programme.

**Benchmark 10: Governments should stimulate the market for production and distribution of suitable reading materials and should support production of materials by learners and facilitators.**

Until recently, teaching adult education in Nigeria has been through the use of primers which were designed only by the organizers with a handful of adult facilitators. Learners' participation has not been sufficient if not totally absent. This has resulted in the teaching of adults not having the expected result because contents of the primers are not meeting the needs of the learners. The Primer-based programme is referred to as the traditional approach with a prescribed curriculum and is certificate oriented.

The primer based programmes are very popular in Nigeria. Hence, the vast majority of literacy classes are primer based. However, the programmes have a disadvantage for not being responsive to the needs of learners and not contributing enough to communal interests and development. Apart from these facts, many of the primers are outdated. Hence, they do not meet the demand of the day as far as adult learning is concerned. To meet these needs therefore, the National Commission for

Adult and Mass Literacy Education, after piloting with Action-Aid International, adopted the REFLECT approach. REFLECT is a participatory approach to literacy delivery aimed at empowering individuals and communities for their own development. There are more than 222 REFLECT Centres nationwide. Plans have reached an advanced stage to establish a REFLECT centre in each of the 774 local government areas in Nigeria through the Millennium Development Funds.

Furthermore, in collaboration with UNESCO, the Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE) has been adopted to serve as a basic strategy for the establishment of 109 LIFE communities nationwide. The LIFE communities are expected to show evidence of benefiting from the acquisition of literacy skills.

**Benchmarks 11: Governments should commit between US\$50 and US\$100 per learner per year for at least three years.**

**Benchmarks 12: Governments should dedicate at least 3% of their national education sector budgets to adult literacy. International donors should fill any remaining resource gaps.**

In Nigeria, all the three tiers of government, (Federal, State and Local) have been responsible for the provision of funds for educational purposes. Albeit, this is done in different form through their budgets. UNESCO recommends that 26% of the national budget of its member nations should be allocated to formal education, while 6% of this should be given to adult and non-formal education. But it is regrettable to note that the Nigeria's budgetary allocation to education is low and is still declining. However, they are unable to meet the target. In 2017, the federal and state governments will spend less than 9 percent of their total budgets of N12.2 trillion on education, despite their publicised commitment towards the sector. The Daily Trust newspaper (2017) analysis of the combined expenditure of the federal and 33 state governments showed that they will spend N1.03 trillion (8.44 percent) on education, this fall short of the 26 percent recommended by United nation. Of its N6.1 trillion budget, the Nigerian government is spending N367.73 billion (6.01 percent) on education. Reacting to poor funding allocation to education generally and adult and non-formal education, Chioma Osuji, the Civil Society Action Coalition on Education for All (CSACEFA) policy advisor said the poor spending on education means Nigeria will have more adult illiterates, poor education quality, low GDP growth and poor achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 which Nigeria is a signatory. The UIS-UNESCO (2015) data estimates primary school aged population is 30 million, including 14.5 million girls. 8.7 million (34 percent

of which are out of school) and 15.1 million boys (29 percent of which are out of school) primary children are out of school in Nigeria.

Looking at the trend in the education annual budgetary allocation between 1990 and 2017 (Table 3) the percentage of the total budget reveals that the government was not consistent. That is, education expenditure is not accorded its priority in the overall budgeting. Otherwise, it should have maintained an increasing proportion in the nation's annual budget. The overall expenditure on the average is 9% whereas the UNESCO target is 26%. Within the current dimension as stated in the benchmarks the government would need to recommit its interest in partnerships with international donors as evidence has shown that whenever this is done, there is always a remarkable growth in enrolment and completion rate in the country. The example which readily comes to mind is the UNDP intervention result between 1995 and 1997.

**Table 3: Federal Government Budget to Education in Nigeria (1990-2017) #bn/tn**

|      | <b>Federal Government<br/>Annual Budget</b> | <b>Total allocation to Education</b> | <b>Education allocation<br/>as%</b> |
|------|---|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1990 | 40.70                                       | 2.20                                 | 5.45                                |
| 1991 | 38.70                                       | 1.80                                 | 4.62                                |
| 1992 | 52.10                                       | 2.40                                 | 4.60                                |
| 1993 | 111.60                                      | 8.00                                 | 7.20                                |
| 1994 | 69.20                                       | 10.30                                | 14.86                               |
| 1995 | 111.50                                      | 12.80                                | 11.50                               |
| 1996 | 121.20                                      | 15.40                                | 10.81                               |
| 1997 | 188.10                                      | 16.80                                | 10.81                               |
| 1998 | 246.30                                      | 23.70                                | 9.61                                |
| 1999 | 249.00                                      | 27.80                                | 11.13                               |
| 2000 | 677.5                                       | 56.60                                | 8.70                                |
| 2001 | 894.2                                       | 62.47                                | 7.00                                |
| 2002 | 578.6                                       | 69.03                                | 5.90                                |
| 2003 | 699.1                                       | NA                                   | NA                                  |
| 2004 | 889.2                                       | NA                                   | NA                                  |
| 2005 | 1.4tr                                       | NA                                   | NA                                  |
| 2006 | 1.5tr                                       | NA                                   | 8.7                                 |
| 2007 | 1.9tr                                       | NA                                   | NA                                  |
| 2008 | 2.2tr                                       | NA                                   | 10.02                               |
| 2009 | NA  | NA                                   | 8.08                                |
| 2010 | 3.9tr                                       | N249.086billion                      | 6.2                                 |
| 2011 | 3.6tr                                       | N306.3billion                        | 7.6                                 |
| 2012 | 3.9tr                                       | N400.15billion                       | 10                                  |
| 2013 | 4.9tr                                       | N426.53billion                       | 8.5                                 |
| 2014 | 4.6tr                                       | N493.00billion                       | 9.8                                 |
| 2015 | 4.6tr                                       | N492.34billion                       | 9.8                                 |
| 2016 | 6.1 tri                                     | N369 billion                         | 6.01                                |
| 2017 | 7.3 tri                                     | N448.01billion                       | 6.4                                 |

**Source:** Federal Ministry of Education/Education Sector Status Report 2003 cited in Akintayo, 2005, Budget Division, Ministry of Finance, Abuja, 2017 and DLM, 2017.



**Table 4: Summary of Financial Allocation to Education and Adult Education (ADE) in Nigeria (1997 – 2017).**

| <b>Year</b> | <b>Total State Budget on Education</b> | <b>Total Budget for ADE</b> | <b>Percentage</b> |
|-------------|--|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| 1997        | 2,327,179,408.00                       | 178,555,225.93              | 7.67              |
| 1998        | 2,735,687,667.00                       | 244,496,470.13              | 8.94              |
| 1999        | 41,575,584,282.00                      | 272,040,781.60              | 0.65              |
| 2000        | 10,190,359,227.00                      | 746,544,453.55              | 7.33              |
| 2001        | 21,911,054,636.00                      | 1,319,888,981.30            | 6.02              |
| 2002        | 21,679,423,606.00                      | 1,260,244,332.12            | 5.81              |
| 2003        | 23,959,727,517.00                      | 751,600,634.00              | 3.14              |
| 2004        | 35,704,543,524.00                      | 926,663,921.00              | 2.60              |
| 2005        | 49,663,888,029.00                      | 1,064,097,092.00            | 2.14              |
| 2006        | 66,364,320,370.00                      | 950,559,117.00              | 1.43              |
| 2007        | 68,869,593,714.43                      | 1,385,750,731.00            | 2.01              |
| 2008        | 69,905,384,917.00                      | 983,833,350.00              | 1.41              |
| 2009        | NA                                     | NA                          | NA                |
| 2010        | N234.8b                                | NA                          | NA                |
| 2011        | N306.3b                                | NA                          | NA                |
| 2012        | N400.15b                               | NA                          | NA                |
| 2013        | N426.53b                               | NA                          | NA                |
| 2014        | N493b                                  | NA                          | NA                |
| 2015        | N392.2b                                | NA                          | NA                |
| 2016        | N369.6b                                | NA                          | 6.01              |
| 2017        | N653.53 b                              | NA                          | 10.7              |

**Table 5: Total Budgetary Allocation to Adult & Non-Formal Education from other Sectors**

| <b>Year</b>  | <b>LGS</b>              | <b>Other Ministries</b> | <b>NGOs</b>         |
|--------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| 1997         | 63,919,390.00           | 25,000.00               | 45,000.00           |
| 1998         | 71,330,767.00           | 27,000.00               | 49,000.00           |
| 1999         | 71,785,075.00           | 29,000.00               | 53,000.00           |
| 2000         | 35,705,972.00           | 32,300.00               | 46,000.00           |
| 2001         | 74,886,474.00           | 37,750.00               | 44,000.00           |
| 2002         | 77,683,199.00           | 43,400.00               | 47,000.00           |
| 2003         | 83,749,165.00           | 107,809.00              | 1,035,000.00        |
| 2004         | 170,120,544.77          | 328,250.00              | 1,039,000.00        |
| 2005         | 175,492,194.77          | 803,000.00              | 57,570.00           |
| 2006         | 180,174,194.77          | 409,000.00              | 59,570.00           |
| 2007         | 188,957,194.77          | 862,950.00              | 48,750.00           |
| 2008         | 166,539,195.77          | 64,850.00               | -                   |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>1,360,343,366.86</b> | <b>2,770,309.00</b>     | <b>2,523,890.00</b> |

*Source: Fasokun, nd: 9.*

**Table 6: Budgetary Allocations of International Development Partners.**

| Year         | UNDP                 | UNESCO              | UNICEF                | DFID                 | WORLD BANK           |
|--------------|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1997         | 41,305,000.00        | 300,000.00          | 5,633,315.00          | -                    | 0                    |
| 1998         | 37,500,000.00        | -                   | 5,401,686.60          | -                    | 0                    |
| 1999         | 1,500,000.00         | -                   | 6,113,404.00          | -                    | 0                    |
| 2000         | 200,000.00           | -                   | 12,773,876.00         | -                    | 0                    |
| 2001         | 1,000,000.00         | -                   | 6,389,300.00          | -                    | 0                    |
| 2002         | 100,000.00           | -                   | 7,184,550.00          | -                    | 0                    |
| 2003         | 328,250.00           | -                   | 6,093,392.80          | -                    | 0                    |
| 2004         | 6,548,000.00         | 240,000.00          | 15,043,141.00         | -                    | 0                    |
| 2005         | -                    | 4,154,000.00        | 31,301,623.00         | -                    | 20,400,000.00        |
| 2006         | -                    | -                   | 67,034,860.00         | -                    | -                    |
| 2007         | -                    | -                   | 78,307,655.00         | 19,154,839.00        | -                    |
| 2008         | -                    | -                   | 4,325,000.00          | -                    | 0                    |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>88,481,250.00</b> | <b>4,694,000.00</b> | <b>245,601,804.88</b> | <b>19,154,839.00</b> | <b>20,400,000.00</b> |

*Source: Fasokun, nd: 10*

Furthermore, many of the state governments do not appreciate the importance of adult and non-formal education in national development. Hence, they do not see the reason why scarce resources should be shared with non-formal education programmes as it was once was in the past. This is the case in the point of Agency for Adult and Non-Formal Education (AANFE), Oyo State. The government has not released any money for the agency's operation since 2005 and in August 2010, when this paper was prepared. Budgetary allocations for education in both Akwa-Ibom and Kaduna States show that on an average, the percentage of education budget in eight years was 13.0% and 7.25% respectively in the two States. With this trend of events, what would happen to adult and non-formal education when the actual budgetary allocation to education is generally poor?

### **The Way Forward in Achieving the Benchmarks of Literacy in Nigeria**

For Nigeria to achieve the international benchmarks and the EFA 50% reduction of illiteracy, there is a need for all stakeholders to go back to the drawing board to solve issues affecting literacy development in the country. Education has always been taken as the responsibility of the government alone. Involvement of civil society should be encouraged and improved. Assessment of current adult education programmes in higher institutions should be reviewed to include compulsory integration of literacy education into the curriculum of Colleges of Education. This is irrespective of the teaching subjects in order to produce the needed manpower.

There is a need for increased sensitization and mobilisation of community leaders to counteract the effect of unfavourable traditions and customs which discourage adult and youths from participating in literacy

activities. There is also a need for the increased use of I.C.Ts (radio, television computer based technologies, and solar powered technologies) to enable access to those in remote contexts as well as those with access to basic social infrastructure.

Poor budgetary allocation means that the current challenges of education such as inadequate qualified teachers, inadequate infrastructure and learning materials and poor learning outcomes among pupils etc in the education sector will not be tackled. The only escaping route for the government is to pump more money, respect the UNESCO recommendations on funding of education in developing countries; improve quality of education, improve teachers and researchers capacities.

Furthermore, there must be an establishment of more special centres e.g. market-based, worship-based and; palace-based centres to bring literacy opportunities closer to the people. University Village Association (UNIVA), an NGO based in University of Ibadan, has successfully used literacy shops to meet up with the demand for literacy education in Bodija Market in Ibadan, Oyo State. The Lapai Literacy Clinic Foundation another NGO based in Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai, is working towards the same direction in Niger State. Institutions where Adult Education is offered should intensify efforts in taking steps at assisting the government on the reduction illiteracy in Nigeria. The government must without further delay embark on the training/retraining of facilitators and supervisors to update their knowledge and enhance their competences. Partnerships should be encouraged with all higher institutions of learning to make this possible. The government must also establish vocational centers for economic empowerment of beneficiaries and facilitate the development, funding and encouragement of Civil Society and Community-Based adult literacy initiatives.

Also, collaboration, networking and holding of adult literacy programme review meetings amongst Ministries and Agencies involved in Basic Education, which implement UNICEF-Supported programmes and projects will go a long way in achieving the benchmarks of literacy in Nigeria. In order to foster synergy and promote best practices between Government, Local Government, line Ministries, the private sector, and the communities' involved in the implementation of these programmes, the federal government would need to intensify efforts in coordinating the activities of all stakeholders involved. This can be achieved by establishing the Early Year Development Committee (EYDC) which is a UNICEF initiative in all the adult education agencies throughout the federation.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Although the problems and challenges facing Adult and Non-Formal Education in Nigeria are enormous, considering the fact that greater attention, is often given to other Sub sectors of education, viz, primary education, secondary education, technical education, tertiary education and special (education of the physically challenged), it is however encouraging that attention is now being given to issues concerning Adult and Non-Formal Education especially at the global level. With this, greater effort is being applied by the practitioners to ensure effective and efficient adult and non-formal education delivery.

Adult education in Nigeria has a long history and has transformed from its initial misconception as mere literacy to a number of other programmes that engage the attention of adults. These include extra-mural studies, continuing education, remedial programme, adult literacy, distance/correspondence education, workers education, community development, extension education and lifelong learning (Fasokun, 1981, 2005). Appraising the International Benchmarks as far as Nigeria is concerned we discovered that Nigeria still has a long way to go, if she is serious about achieving a higher rate of literacy in the country.

The Nigerian government only pays lip service to the issue concerning non-formal education as it is not investing in literacy. The facilitators' pay is nothing to write home about in some States of the Federation. Learners are not inspired to learn and the budgetary allocation is not up to 6% of the national education budgets. The picture painted by this submission now calls for the appraisal of Nigeria's efforts and commitment in realising the benchmarks.

In essence, literacy programme should be community driven and should not be donor or external agent holistic driven. It has been established that people become committed to a programme when they are involved right from the planning stage as it assures them of future ownership. Apart from lack of access, infrastructures, teaching and learning materials, the greatest challenge facing adult education is inadequate funding by the Federal, States and Local Governments. Subsequently, adult and non-formal education at all levels of government seems to be suffering seriously from underfunding.

Analyzing Nigeria's commitment to adult literacy as far as the international benchmarks on adult literacy are concerned showed that much is still left undone. There is a great need for the recruitment and training of competent adult education personnel who should be motivated to support policies and programmes on adult education throughout the country. Without a quantitative number of personnel, no amount of funding or other measures would yield the desired results.

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